

Message Text

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EXDIS -- DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, IS, US
SUBJECT: WEIZMAN ON PEACE INITIATIVES AND THE BEGIN VISIT

1. DURING MY MEETING WITH DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN
TODAY (MARCH 14) HE DISCUSSED
HIS VIEWS ON BEGIN'S FORTHCOMING TRIP TO WASHINGTON AND
THE FUTURE FOR PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. INCIDENTALLY, HE
DOES NOT EXPECT TO BE ASKED TO ACCOMPANY THE PRIME MINISTER
AND HE CLAIMS HE DOES NOT WANT TO GO.

2. HIS VISIT TO WASHINGTON DID NOT CHANGE WEIZMAN'S
MIND ABOUT THE PROSPECTS
FOR A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT. HE SEE AS THE ONLY REAL
POSSIBILITY THE CONCLUSION OF A SEPARATE AGREEMENT
"WITH EGYPT--PERIOD." THUS, HE BELIEVES THE KEY QUESTION
IS WHAT CAN ISRAEL GIVE TO SADAT WHICH WILL PERMIT HIM TO
"HAVE HIS CAKE AND EAT IT TOO." HE IS CONVINCED THAT
NEITHER BEGIN NOR ANY OTHER ISRAELI GOVERNMENT COULD
EVER COMMIT ISRAEL TO A WITHDRAWAL FROM THE WEST
BANK--"NOT EVEN I WOULD SAY THAT."

3. WEIZMAN MUSED AT LENGTH OVER BEGIN'S DILEMMA. HE
REMINDS ME THAT BEGIN HAS SWITCHED FROM HIS PARTY'S
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LINE ON WITHDRAWAL FROM THE SINAI AND IN HIS PLAN FOR
THE WEST BANK. HE HAS CONVINCED HIMSELF THAT HE HAS
GONE A VERY LONG WAY TO MEET THE EGYPTIANS' DEMANDS. HE
OBSERVED THAT BEGIN, WHO WAS "ALWAYS A HARDLINER ('WHICH
WAS HIS STRENGTH AND HIS WEAKNESS')," IS DEEPLY HURT
THAT NEITHER WE NOR THE EGYPTIANS SEEM TO UNDERSTAND THIS.
IT IS IRONIC, WEIZMAN SAID, THAT BOTH BEGIN AND SADAT

THINK THEY HAVE GONE ALL THE WAY AND NEITHER BELIEVES HE CAN GO ANY FURTHER. WEIZMAN THUS SEES THE PROBLEM AS HOW TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN SADAT AND BEGIN. HE SAID THAT FOR A TIME HE HAD PUSHED THE IDEA THAT GAMASY SHOULD COME TO ISRAEL AND SPEAK TO BEGIN. IN HIS ENGAGINGLY EGOISTIC FASHION HE RECALLED THAT "I FOUND MYSELF RUNNING BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN BEGIN AND SADAT--I FOUND MYSELF BECOMING A KISSINGER AND I HAD TO SAY, 'WAIT A MINUTE, HOLD IT, EZER'." ON A MORE SOLEMN NOTE, HE OBSERVED, THAT WITH ALL DUE RESPECT TO ROY AHERTON'S STALWART EFFORTS HE BELIEVES POSITIVE RESULTS IN THE PEACE PROCESS CAN ONLY BE GAINED BY RETURNING TO FACE-TO-FACE TALKS WITH THE EGYPTIANS.

4. WEIZMAN ALSO FOCUSED ON THE 242 DILEMMA AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO BEGIN'S WEST BANK PLAN. HE SAID THAT--PUTTING ASIDE THE GAZA STRIP AS A UNIQUE SITUATION--WE ARE DEALING WITH THREE AREAS--THE SINAI, THE GOLAN AND THE WEST BANK. EGYPT CAN CLAIM TOTAL SOVEREIGNTY TO THE SINAI. ISRAEL MAY ARGUE FOR RETENTION OF SOME AIRFIELDS AND SETTLEMENTS, BUT IN FACT IT HAS AGREED TO FULL EGYPTIAN SOVEREIGNTY "ALL THE WAY TO THE INTERNATIONAL BORDER." HE ALSO ADMITTED THAT SYRIA HAS A LEGITIMATE AND HISTORIC CLAIM TO THE GOLAN, NOTWITHSTANDING THE FACT THAT ISRAEL MAY OR MAY NOT AGREE TO RETURNING ALL OF IT TO SYRIA. HOWEVER, THERE NEVER HAS BEEN ANY LEGITIMACY TO ANY CLAIM BY
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JORDAN OVER THE WEST BANK. THE WILLINGNESS OF BEGIN TO AT LEAST TEMPORARILY FOREGO ISRAEL'S HISTORIC RIGHT TO THE WEST BANK IS ANTITHETICAL TO HUSSEIN'S DEMANDS FOR TOTAL WITHDRAWAL. THUS, IN WEIZMAN'S VIEW, 242 AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE WEST BANK IS TOTALLY DIFFERENT THAN ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE SINAI AND THE GOLAN. AS HE PUT IT, "ISRAEL STAYS MILITARILY ON THE WEST BANK; --AND THAT LEAVES 242 AS A NON-STARTER. SOME WAY MUST BE FOUND AROUND THIS PROBLEM TO ENABLE SADAT TO BUY A BILATERAL SETTLEMENT WITH ISRAEL."

5. I ASKED WEIZMAN IN WHAT MOOD HE FOUND BEGIN UPON HIS RETURN AND WHAT WE MIGHT EXPECT FROM HIM NEXT WEEK IN WASHINGTON. HE SAID BEGIN HAD TAKEN THE WEEKEND TRAGEDY VERY HARD. HE HAD FOUND HIM DEPRESSED, BUT ALSO TOUGHER THAN EVER IN HIS CONVICTION THAT THE PALESTINIANS MUST NEVER BE ALLOWED CONTROL OF THE WEST BANK. WEIZMAN WARNED THAT IF THE PRESIDENT THINKS HE CAN PERSUADE BEGIN TO ANY FORMULATION WHICH HAS THE EFFECT IN BEGIN'S EYES OF ABANDONING THE WEST BANK "EITHER TO THE PALESTINAINS OR TO JORDAN, HE WILL NEVER GET IT--ESPECIALLY IN THE MOOD HE IS IN NOW."

BEGIN WILLNOT CAVE, WEIZMAN SAID, NO MATTER WHAT
PRESSURE IS BROUGHT TO BEAR. I ASKED IF WEIZMAN HAD ANY
ADVISE--ON OR OFF THE RECORD--ON HOW WE MIGHT HANDLE
BEGIN NEXT WEEK. HE HAD NONE, SAVE TO REITERATE
THAT THE WEEKEND EVENTS WERE SUPPORTIVE OF BEGIN'S
POSITIONS AND "ALL THE OTHER HARDLINERS IN THIS COUNTRY."
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